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Chairman: Mr. Busacca ..... (Italy)
later: Mr. Wissa (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Egypt)
later: Mr. Busacca (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Italy)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 105: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/52/3, A/52/38/Rev.1, A/52/116-S/1997/317, A/52/300, 326, 337, 352, 355, 356, 408, A/52/447-S/1997/775 and A/52/460)

Agenda item 106: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (*continued*) (A/52/113-E/1997/18, A/52/281, A/52/447-S/1997/775 and A/52/460)

1. **Mr. Paiva** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration (IOM)), speaking with reference to the issues facing migrant women, with emphasis on trafficking, said that migrants in general were frequently exposed to difficult conditions, both while moving and when settled in receiving countries. However, the women among them were even more vulnerable, and their special needs must be taken into account at all stages of their migration. That approach was the basis of the gender policy endorsed by the States members of IOM.

2. As emphasized at the Beijing and Cairo Conferences, women migrant workers were particularly subject to violence. Moreover, once trapped within an illegal migration circle, they were highly vulnerable to abuses such as bonded labour and forced prostitution, and there was growing evidence that the phenomenon was increasingly controlled by international criminal networks.

3. IOM had carried out a number of in-depth studies on trafficking in women in Europe, Latin America and Asia. Two recent studies, concerning women from the Philippines and the Dominican Republic, had concentrated on trafficking from the sending countries' perspective. Whereas a number of European studies had focused on transit and the receiving end. The results had alerted policy makers to the causes, characteristics and consequences of the problem, and recommendations had been made on how to combat trafficking and protect its victims.

4. In June 1996 a European conference on trafficking in women, organized by the Commission of the European Union and IOM, had adopted a plan of action. One of the primary problems highlighted at that Conference had been the lack of reliable data. A research project was therefore under way concerning the availability of data on trafficking in human beings; recommendations would be formulated on improving collection and sharing of information, and priority areas for further research would be identified.

5. IOM had concluded that its own action should focus both on prevention — through information campaigns, training and capacity-building — and on assistance to the victims of trafficking. There were currently two small pilot projects for the return and reintegration of Vietnamese and Cambodian women subjected to trafficking. There was also an information campaign in Ukraine, in collaboration in local non-governmental organizations, targeting vulnerable women and communities in that country.

6. Trafficking in human beings involved basic human rights and dignity as well as border control. It was an abuse which could be stopped only through concerted action on the part of Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and society at large. Such action, in order to be more effective, needed to be based on better information, and IOM would continue working in close cooperation with all concerned parties in addressing the phenomenon of trafficking in women migrants.

7. **Mrs. Eshmambetova** (Kyrgyzstan) said that the Subregional Conference of Senior Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the Platform for Action in Central and Eastern Europe, held in Bucharest in September 1996, had assisted countries with transitional economies in the preparation of their national action plans. Kyrgyzstan's action plan set forth an analysis of the situation of women in the country and identified four key areas for activities: health care, employment, prevention of violence against women, and women in decision-making. The Government had implemented a number of programmes in those fields; and a gender perspective had been incorporated into Kyrgyzstan's policies on education, health care and development. The Commission on Family and Women's Affairs coordinated activities in that regard. More than 20 women's non-governmental organizations were active in the country. Kyrgyzstan had undertaken to increase the representation of women in all areas of government to 40 per cent by the year 2000.

8. National legislation was being reviewed in order to ensure gender equality under the law. Special parliamentary hearings had been held to consider all questions relating to the situation of women in the country. Although active cooperation with international organizations and financial institutions had been very helpful in implementing the national action plan, much remained to be done. Kyrgyzstan's economic difficulties had a direct impact on the social situation of women, particularly in rural areas. Her Government was currently striving to ensure their access to land and loans.

9. Violence against women migrant workers and trafficking in women and children were new challenges which required urgent measures by the world community.

In that connection, Kyrgyzstan supported the proposal to establish a database on the transborder smuggling of illegal migrants.

10. She hoped that the Organization would be able to achieve equal representation of women and men in the Secretariat by the year 2000, particularly through the recruitment of women from unrepresented and under-represented developing countries, and hailed the efforts being made by the specialized agencies in that regard.

11. **Mrs. Sandru** (Romania) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women had established a framework for the empowerment of women and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policies and programmes at national, regional and international levels. It had also emphasized that fulfilment of the gender-equality objective demanded strong political determination from Governments and the international community alike. Her delegation therefore welcomed the decision of the Economic and Social Council to select the theme of gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system for its 1997 coordination segment. During the upcoming comprehensive review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, particular focus should be placed on an integrated assessment of gender mainstreaming. Her delegation appreciated the role of the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and that of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in developing gender-sensitive policies throughout the United Nations system.

12. The promotion of equality of opportunities for women and men had gained particular significance for Romania in the context of its ongoing socio-economic reform. Its non-discriminatory legislation represented the ultimate guarantee in the promotion of gender equality. The Government had set out its main priorities in that area in a national plan on women, which emphasized empowerment of women, improving their access to the labour market, combating violence against women, bettering their state of health, and integrating a gender perspective into all government policies and programmes. Representatives of civil society had been encouraged to participate in those difficult tasks. Specific projects undertaken so far dealt with such issues as women in development, elderly women, and rural women, as well as measures to combat female unemployment, including support for women's entrepreneurship. Those policies were being implemented in close relation with programmes on children and family issues.

13. An important objective was modernization of the gender-related legislative and institutional framework. Current initiatives to that end included a draft law on equal opportunities to encourage women's participation in political life, legislation to enhance equality of opportunities in the labour market, a new legal framework to combat domestic violence, and the upcoming inauguration of a national agency for equality of opportunities.

14. National efforts should be supported by international cooperation. Her Government valued highly its projects carried out jointly with the United Nations Secretariat and specialized agencies and with the European Union and the Council of Europe. Romania was also participating in an International Labour Organization pilot programme for the promotion of equal opportunities in labour administration. The United Nations Development Fund for Women had recently launched a project in Romania to strengthen the capacity of women in political decision-making, integrated in a broader programme on good governance. Her delegation believed that the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women should carry out studies on the gender situation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

15. The commemoration in 1998 of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the focus which the Commission on the Status of Women would place, at its next session, on the human rights of women as universal human rights, would provide an excellent occasion for the consolidation of that important concept.

16. **Ms. Aponte De Zacklin** (Venezuela) said that her delegation fully supported the statements made at a previous meeting on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and on behalf of the Rio Group.

17. The follow-up to the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women was an integral part of Venezuela's social agenda. The National Council for Women, in its role as a government body responsible for the design and coordination of policies aimed at achieving equality of opportunities for women, was implementing a series of programmes in the context of the ninth national plan and the Beijing Platform for Action. It was currently working to formulate a national plan of action for women, setting out the strategies and areas of action, and the resources and programmes required for the attainment of various interconnected goals for the advancement of women in social, political, economic and cultural areas. It had also promoted the creation of an intersectoral and multidisciplinary commission made up of representatives of various entities including ministries and women's non-governmental organizations.

18. The overall goal of the plan of action was to promote equality of opportunities for women. Its specific goals

included: reforming the law to meet women's needs, promoting equal access to the labour market, encouraging recognition of the role of women in economic development and social change, bringing about changes in the values and principles passed down through the educational system, enabling women to participate at decision-making levels in political and social fields, developing the political autonomy of women, contributing to the eradication of female poverty and preparing sectoral policies and programmes for the provision of social services for the family and adolescent mothers.

19. An amendment to the country's electoral law was currently under consideration in Parliament. The subject of violence against women and the family had been discussed at a recent Andean subregional meeting in Caracas of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States, and a bill on that subject had been introduced in Parliament.

20. Venezuelan women had spared no sacrifice in their unceasing defence of the dignity of the family, justice, peace and of all their social, political and cultural rights.

21. **Mr. Ball** (New Zealand) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women continued to inspire global efforts to ensure equality for women. New Zealand remained committed to responding to the aspirations of Governments and non-governmental organizations which had worked so hard for the Beijing Conference, and non-governmental organizations were encouraged to continue to play an active role in the follow-up.

22. It was appropriate, if long overdue, that the United Nations was taking steps to institutionalize equality. Mainstreaming should occur not just in areas of the Organization's work that had traditionally been more open to women, but also in the less traditional areas and at the highest levels of management. The importance or gender and mainstreaming took on added importance at a time of reform. His delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's efforts towards achieving the goal of 50/50 gender equality by the year 2000, including the recent appointment of women to high positions. His delegation looked forward to continued efforts to appoint and promote more women, and especially to address gender imbalance at senior levels. Numbers were only the most visible part of the equation; as the Secretary-General had acknowledged, a culture change was needed. He should continue to work towards the creation of a gender-sensitive work environment in the Secretariat.

23. In the context of his Government's efforts towards gender balance, the Minister of Women's Affairs had recently announced plans to improve the proportion of women on the boards of State-owned enterprises. October 1997 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of equal-pay legislation, a significant step towards women's equality in New Zealand.

24. The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1998, would be an occasion to consider human rights in their broadest sense, but it would be appropriate to reaffirm that women's rights were human rights, if only because some continued to doubt that principle. As the Secretary-General had recently acknowledged, steps to mainstream women's rights in the human rights programme had so far been experimental and ad hoc. His delegation looked forward to that significant gap being addressed by the new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

25. Having analysed the Beijing Platform for Action, his Government had identified six critical areas for action to improve the status of women in New Zealand: mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, collecting information on women's unpaid work, reducing the gender pay gap, collecting more and better data about all aspects of women's lives, implementing the recommendations which applied specifically to Maori women and girls as indigenous people, and enhancing women's role in decision-making. His Government had recently devoted considerable efforts to the issue of unpaid work, and had recently announced funding for a national time-use survey. For the first time, data would be available on women's and men's unpaid productive activities.

26. His Government took seriously its international obligations as it continued to explore ways to improve the status of women, and looked forward to discussing further efforts to follow up the Fourth World Conference on Women at the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

27. *Mr. Wissa (Egypt), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

28. **Ms. Acuner** (Turkey) said that the Secretary-General's reports on the two items provided a useful overview of measures and activities undertaken within the United Nations system, and also addressed actions required at the national level. The Secretary-General's report (A/52/281) on the implementation of the Beijing declaration and Platform for Action provided a comprehensive and enlightening outline of progress achieved and measures taken by various United Nations bodies. Her delegation encouraged the Secretary-General's efforts in mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. The conclusions adopted by the Economic and Social Council were the most comprehensive

intergovernmental action on gender mainstreaming to date; her delegation looked forward to their translation into action. A gender-mainstreaming strategy required that gender issues should be directly linked to institutional spending.

29. Paragraph 60 of document A/52/281 stated that a number of new efforts were under way to determine with greater clarity how programme and project resources benefited women and men respectively. Her delegation strongly welcomed those efforts, and proposed that the Secretary-General should prepare a comparative report setting forth to what extent different categories of projects of the United Nations agencies included women's interests and gender mainstreaming issues, and detailing resources allocated in that regard. A comparative and standardized report could help in drawing up accountability strategies regarding financial allocations for gender issues and in assessing gender-based outcomes of project and development activities. Systematic gender analysis throughout the United Nations system should become an integral part of the current reform programme.

30. Her delegation also welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, and was particularly pleased to see that the Institute was establishing new concepts and methods for mainstreaming gender issues into development. Her delegation recognized the unique function of the Institute. Member States should expand their financial support of that body. More funds should also be allocated to the Division for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women to enable them to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

31. Mainstreaming was a highly political issue requiring commitment at the highest level. Turkey fully recognized that ultimate responsibility for gender mainstreaming rested with national and international organizations, and that gender equality was a sine qua non for the realization of genuine democracy, leading to the full enjoyment of human rights by all citizens. The institutionalization of women's issues had gained impetus in Turkey during the 1990s, and mainstreaming gender equality in all government policies and programmes had become a priority issue. Work was in hand to establish gender focal points at the ministerial level.

32. There was a need to redefine development from a gender perspective. Her delegation was confident that the Secretary-General's efforts for gender mainstreaming would be a milestone in translating policy statements into action at the national and international levels.

33. **Ms. Swengbe** (Liberia) said that, during the reform period at the United Nations, the equal representation of women in all spheres of life must be the concern of all Member States. That was why Liberia supported the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and welcomed the resulting decisions taken at the national, regional and international levels.

34. Her country had always regarded the advancement of women as a national policy. Over the years, Liberian women had been involved in decision-making in development and civil administration. During the protracted civil war, Liberian women had been in the forefront of efforts to bring about a peaceful solution. Liberia's new President had continued the tradition of appointing women to cabinet-level positions; for instance, the judicial branch was headed by a female jurist. Those leaders would add a feminine perspective during the reconstruction and social rehabilitation of Liberia.

35. In order to ensure the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, every effort must be made at the international, regional and national levels to eliminate factors impeding the advancement of women. In that connection, Liberia condemned the actions of some States which sanctioned trafficking in women and girls and the degrading treatment of migrant women. Equal justice and opportunities for women at all levels were essential to ensure gender equality.

36. **Mr. Garcia Gonzalez** (El Salvador) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made at a previous meeting on behalf of the Rio Group. El Salvador attached particular importance to the decisive role of women in building a more open and participatory society with equal opportunities for all. His country actively promoted women's rights by participating in various regional conferences on integrating women into economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and was fulfilling its commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action by revising its national legislation. A new family code, which provided ample benefits and protection for women, had been adopted. El Salvador attached particular importance to the education and training of women, and was planning to set up a centre to provide women with skills in various areas such as the management of small businesses.

37. The Government had taken a number of practical steps such as establishing the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women, implementing a national policy for women, setting up a programme to help small enterprises and drafting a bill to ensure equality of opportunity.

38. El Salvador strongly supported all initiatives to eliminate the various forms of violence against women and girls and the feminization of poverty. He noted with interest

the reports submitted by the Secretary-General on those topics and expressed support for the efforts of various delegations to draw up draft resolutions on them. National efforts to ensure the enjoyment of the rights of women - which was closely linked with the eradication of poverty - must be supported by international financial institutions and private financing sources.

39. He reaffirmed El Salvador's political will to continue its efforts to ensure the rights of women and equality of opportunity for all in order to consolidate democracy and social development.

40. **Mr. Santaputra** (Thailand) underscored the positive impact of the work carried out by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Thailand welcomed the efforts to enhance the Fund's management capabilities to enable it to carry out its important tasks more effectively. Thailand also welcomed the establishment of the Trust Fund in Support of Action to Eliminate Violence against Women, and hoped that it would support a wide range of strategies undertaken by women's groups and Governments to eliminate gender-based violence.

41. With regard to the status of women in the Secretariat, although his delegation was encouraged by the recent appointment of women at policy-making and decision-making levels as a new dimension of the reforms, it was still concerned that achieving the goal of 50/50 gender distribution by the year 2000 was by no means assured. Policy should be translated into action with sufficient financial and human resources, and the importance of equitable geographical distribution should be kept in mind.

42. Thailand was committed to achieving the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which required close collaboration on the part of the Governments, civil society and international organizations. Among its measures to implement the Beijing Platform, his country had integrated gender perspectives into its economic and social development programme and had already initiated preparations for the five-year review of the Platform in the year 2000. The National Commission on Women's Affairs was organizing a seminar, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, on the follow-up to the Beijing Conference.

43. Thailand was also committed to increasing the number of women at decision-making levels in the economic, social and political spheres. The new Thai Constitution contained specific provisions for ensuring gender equality and eliminating discrimination. His country also recognized the importance of international norms in protecting and promoting the rights of women. It had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985 and had already withdrawn five of the seven reservations made upon accession. At the regional level, Thailand supported the role of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in facilitating the implementation of the Platform for Action through training sessions, policy meetings and the development of national action plans in critical areas.

44. **Mr. Guberavich** (Belarus) said that his country, as a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, fulfilled all its obligations under the Convention and participated in United Nations activities to improve the status of women. He welcomed the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and supported its conclusions and recommendations on priority issues, including the need to provide technical and other assistance to countries with economies in transition in their efforts to improve the situation of women.

45. The Constitution provided for equal opportunities for women and men in a wide range of social, political, cultural and other fields. However, the economic difficulties of the transitional period were depriving women of the many advantages that they had enjoyed under a planned economy. Unemployment, inflation and insufficient social support had worsened the living conditions of families headed by single mothers. Nevertheless, his Government was making a serious effort to comply with its international obligations to improve the living conditions of women, families and children. Belarus had adopted legislation to provide support for mothers and children and tax benefits for families. In 1996 the Government had adopted a national plan of action to improve the situation of women up to the year 2000.

46. International cooperation played an important role in his country's efforts in that field. Countries with economies in transition were not always able to tackle serious social problems on their own. Belarus welcomed international financial and consultative assistance and hoped to benefit from greater cooperation with the international community in promoting the advancement of women. His Government supported the approach to solving the problems of women in countries with economies in transition set forth in the Platform for Action, particularly with regard to assistance from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

47. He hoped that the United Nations system would continue to play a central role in monitoring the implementation of the Platform for Action and give priority

to elaborating a more effective strategy to solve the problems of women throughout the world.

48. **Mr. Al-Hariri** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the advancement of women was one of the most important issues to be addressed by both the international community and his country. The new approach to that issue had changed many erroneous views on women and their role, and had led to the effective participation of women in all aspects of life.

49. In the past three decades, qualitative changes had been made which were reflected in statistics showing the increase in the number of women in decision-making positions and in the number engaged in economic activities and social, academic and technical fields.

50. The Beijing Conference had confirmed, as had other United Nations conferences, that foreign occupation prevented women from enjoying their most basic human rights. Arab women living unde. Israeli occupation in the Syrian Golan, South Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories were deprived of their most basic right to education and health care and their right to live in freedom. Recently, the Israeli occupying forces had imprisoned a Syrian student residing in the occupied Syrian Golan, and had prevented her from pursuing her studies in Syria on a trumped-up pretext in contravention of all international human rights instruments guaranteeing women the right to education, security and freedom. He asked all those who supported peace and the rights of women to continue to work to prevent such measures being carried out by the occupying Israeli forces against women in the occupied Syrian Golan and other occupied Arab territory.

51. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which had been welcomed by his country, was a great achievement for the women of the world, particularly with respect to education, health, the ending of injustice, the condemnation of foreign occupation, violence against women, and women's involvement in decision-making in economic and social life. His country had formulated a national strategy for the implementation of the Platform for Action.

52. His country greatly valued its cooperation with United Nations agencies in such activities as the programme for enhancing the role of rural women in development, and was determined to make progress in achieving women's rights, thereby enabling them to participate at all levels.

53. *Mr. Busacca (Italy) resumed the Chair.*

54. **Ms. Attah** (Nigeria) said that her delegation welcomed the efforts of Ms. Angela King, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, and her team to ensure that the advancement of women was treated as a priority within the United Nations system. She noted with satisfaction the appointment of Mrs. Mary Robinson as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the first woman to hold the post, and of Ms. Yakin Erturk as Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which she viewed as a practical response to the call to have more women in decision-making positions within the United Nations system, a trend which must continue. She also endorsed the recommendations regarding recruitment, promotion and retention of female staff, contained in paragraphs 42-44 of the Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/52/408).

55. Discussion of the advancement of women would remain an exercise in rhetoric unless women were empowered economically, through education and training. She therefore commended the funding by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) of training programmes for women, and welcomed the focus within the United Nations system on the education of the girl-child, the future woman.

56. Nigeria recognized the critical role of women in the development and had sought to enhance their contribution by establishing machinery for the advancement of women at both national and regional levels, including federal and state ministries of women's affairs and social development, as well as local multi-purpose centres, which provided literacy classes and skills training for income-generating activities. The family economic advancement programme, was directed towards eradicating poverty by establishing microcredit schemes to benefit Nigerians living in poverty, two thirds of whom were women.

57. Women's political empowerment was hampered by traditional perceptions of their role. Her Government had therefore decided that affirmative action would be necessary to increase their representation in the federal and state legislatures and in decision-making positions in the public sector.

58. Conscious of the devastating effects of war on women and children, the First Lady, Mrs. Maryam Sani Abacha, had organized a summit of wives of African heads of State and Government to sensitize them to the role they might play in the peaceful resolution of conflicts. A report on the summit had been submitted to the Organization of African Unity.

59. In order to enhance health care for women and children, a specialist hospital was being built in the capital and mobile health clinics were operational in every State of

the country. In addition, a national child-immunization programme had been set up.

60. Following the Beijing Conference, national workshops and seminars had been conducted and manuals produced to raise public awareness of the critical areas identified in the Beijing Platform for Action. Her Government's draft national plan of action for the implementation of the Platform would shortly be submitted to the Division for the Advancement of Women. Also, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development was reviewing existing legislation in order to identify outdated laws which impeded the advancement of women. Non-governmental organizations were working with the Ministry in the various critical areas. In implementing the Platform for Action, however, lack of adequate resources was an obvious constraint, and she therefore appealed for enhanced international cooperation to break the cycle of underdevelopment and poverty which hampered women's empowerment.

61. **Mr. Jong Myong Hak** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that, while humanity stood at the threshold of a new millennium, women were still subjected to discrimination and violence and threatened by unemployment, poverty, disease and illiteracy. The implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action would do much to redress that situation, and his Government therefore regarded it as a priority. The successes of the organs of the United Nations system, as reflected in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the Beijing Conference (A/52/281), should give renewed impetus to the efforts of individual Member States. He welcomed the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the fields of women's health and employment.

62. In addressing the problem of violence against women, the international community must not overlook acts of violence committed in the past. His delegation wished to draw attention in that regard to the plight of so-called "comfort women", who were forced into sexual slavery in Korea and other Asian countries by Japanese occupying forces during the Second World War. He urged the Japanese Government to apologize sincerely to those women and to make appropriate reparations.

63. While women's rights must be enshrined in law, de facto equality would be achieved only if Governments created practical conditions favourable to equal participation by women in political and economic activities. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea had enacted legislation on gender equality, women's right to work and to equal pay for equal labour, and women now played a full part in the life of the country. One in every five deputies in the Supreme People's Assembly was a woman, and women had been appointed as ministers, factory managers and chairpersons of cooperative-farm management boards.

64. His Government would continue to contribute to the international community's efforts to achieve the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action, namely, equality, development and peace.

65. **Ms. Flórez Prida** (Cuba) said that, in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the international community faced crucial challenges ranging from the eradication of poverty to women's full enjoyment of all human rights. In developing countries women faced particularly tragic obstacles in the form of armed conflict, debt arising from structural adjustment programmes and unilateral coercive measures. Women in both developing and developed countries continued to suffer from inadequate medical attention, child prostitution, rape and physical abuse. In order to achieve the goals set by the Beijing Conference, namely equality, development and peace, access to international and national funding and a favourable international environment were essential.

66. Cuba welcomed the recent ratifications of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and paid tribute to the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It also expressed support for the Working Group on the Elaboration of a Draft Optional Protocol. It welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/52/281) and the Economic and Social Council's recommendations concerning the integration of a gender perspective in all United Nations policies and programmes.

67. In 1996, the Government, in collaboration with the Federation of Cuban Women, had formulated a far-reaching national plan of action as a follow-up to the Beijing Conference. The plan was now in the process of implementation.

68. The example of Cuba showed that the situation of women could be transformed, given political will. Cuban women were highly represented in many different professions, including members of parliament, civil servants, directors and research scientists. In addition, more than 50

per cent of Cuban technicians, and students in universities and technical schools were women.

69. Lastly, he drew attention to the continuing impediment to the advancement of women in Cuba caused by the unilateral and unjust economic embargo imposed by the United States of America. The embargo was even being strengthened in open defiance of the will of the international community.

70. **Ms. Steiner** (Israel) said that her Government had adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as guidelines in its policy-making. It was committed to empowering women, first, through the eradication of female poverty and the advancement of women in economic life. Vocational training programmes had been established and women were being encouraged to start their own small businesses. Despite those measures, women were not yet "breaking through the glass ceiling", and new legislation had therefore been passed to tackle their under-representation in politics and decision-making positions.

71. The problem of violence against women was of particular concern to her Government. Following the Beijing Conference, eight new shelters for battered women had been opened, including one in the Arab sector, as well as 20 centres for the prevention of domestic violence. There had been a massive media campaign to highlight the issue. Counselling was being provided for violent men in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, and a treatment centre had been established. The Ministry of Justice, together with the police and women's organizations, had initiated a special assistance programme for victims of rape and sexual assault. A pilot study was under way to determine the extent and nature of domestic violence in Israel. She firmly believed that the eradication of violence against women was a prerequisite for their advancement.

72. **Ms. Arystanbekova** (Kazakhstan) said that Beijing Conference had been the most important event of the past decade for the world's women, as well as being a convincing demonstration of their solidarity. The most urgent challenge now facing the international community and the United Nations was the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Commission on the Status of Women should play a leading role in that regard. Her Government had noted with satisfaction the results of the Commission's latest session, and hoped that, as the international community prepared to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Commission's efforts would lead to the adoption of a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. That protocol, currently being elaborated, would be a timely step forward in the cause of women's rights.

73. Her Government's commitment to implementing the Beijing Platform was evidenced by the recent adoption of an outline State policy on the advancement of women. Key objectives were the equalization of opportunities for women and men and the mainstreaming of gender issues in policy-making. The enhancement of the status of women and children had been identified as a priority in Kazakhstan's State development strategy to the year 2030.

74. The focal point for gender issues was the Council on Women, the Family and Population, which worked closely with ministries, departments, scientific institutions and non-governmental and international organizations. The Council organized research and debate on women and the family. Events held under its auspices included a round-table discussion on the problems for women of adapting to the new social and economic climate and a republic-wide conference on the current situation and outlook for the development of gender studies in Kazakhstan. The Council had also established a number of women's clubs.

75. The Council had concluded that there was a need for a national centre for gender research. To that end, her Government would welcome the support of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the international financial institutions. It would also welcome technical assistance in order to enhance the mainstreaming of gender issues in its work. It had noted with interest the recommendations recently adopted by the Economic and Social Council on the matter, and believed that they represented a blueprint for gender mainstreaming at all levels and in all areas.

76. **Mrs. Mohammed** (Republic of Yemen) said that the importance of the advancement of women made it imperative to overcome all obstacles and translate recommendations into reality. Her country fully realized the importance of policies and programmes that would enable women to participate in political, economic and social activities and in decision-making, protect their human rights, provide educational and work opportunities and integrate them fully into society as an effective force. Her delegation believed that the United Nations system had played a fundamental role in raising levels of awareness of the issues of gender equality and violence against women. It also believed that it was important for national and international measures to be taken to protect the legal and human rights of women at all levels of society. Her delegation commended the work

done by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, UNIFEM, UNESCO and UNICEF.

77. It was clear from statistics that women represented 70 per cent of those living in poverty throughout the world, a fact which made it imperative to take action against the underlying causes that restricted women's freedom and denied their humanity. In her country, no distinction was made between the economic development of society and the advancement of women. The Constitution guaranteed women their rights. Increasing numbers of girls were enroling in universities and professional institutes, women were represented in the Government and the diplomatic corps and had participated fully in both parliamentary elections that had been held since the unification of the country. Special training centres for handicapped girls were being established to enable them to overcome their disabilities. At the same time, her country was making every effort to respect national particularities and the traditional values of its society.

78. She expressed support for the statement made at the previous meeting on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Providing development assistance, easing the burden of debt, combating poverty, and establishing an economic environment that would favour the provision of educational opportunities were the best way of ensuring that levels of awareness would be raised, women empowered and the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women implemented.

79. **Mrs. Brennen-Haylock** (Bahamas), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that she was pleased Governments had continued to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and hoped the advancement of women remained a high priority on the international agenda. If sustained economic growth and sustainable development were to be achieved, women had to be perceived as key components in development.

80. The CARICOM countries believed that it was important on the national level to consolidate gains already made and to examine new approaches to the goals of poverty eradication, the economic empowerment of women and the prevention of violence against women. Three recent encounters in the subregion had helped to do just that. They welcomed the assistance of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in conducting two pilot projects in Saint Kitts and Nevis and in Antigua and Barbuda on the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policies. Regional and national workshops and seminars on the economic empowerment of women had also taken place in the Bahamas. The experiences gained from these activities as well as from meetings and studies in the areas of poverty reduction and violence against women would help it to make a useful contribution to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women when it dealt in depth with violence against women the following year.

81. It appreciated the work of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of W. en and the United Nations Development Fund for Women and would continue to support them.

82. While CARICOM countries had not individually submitted national implementation plans, they had done so collectively in post-Beijing Conference reports, which had been transmitted to the Secretariat.

83. She welcomed the decision taken by the Economic and Social Council on the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the United Nations system. However, she was disappointed that the representation of women at the D-1 level and above remained low, and that the representation of women from developing countries and CARICOM countries remained inadequate. Moreover, gender balance had to be attained throughout the United Nations system and not only in the Secretariat.

84. She commended the Secretary-General for the high-level attention given to the advancement of women with the appointment of his Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the improved allocation of resources to the Division for the Advancement of Women. She hoped the Secretary-General would continue to accord priority to the advancement of women and felt that the transfer of the Office of the Focal Point for Women to that of the Special Adviser was a step in the right direction.

85. More effective use could be made of the Commission on the Status of Women to ensure progress in implementing the outcome of the Beijing Conference. The Commission's discussions should be a learning experience and there ought to be the fullest participation possible by the United Nations system and by international and non-governmental organizations.

86. CARICOM countries attached great importance to the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the five year review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action as well as the five-year review of the Beijing Conference in the year 2000. They welcomed the progress made in the Working Group on the Elaboration of a Draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

87. In time with their commitment to the advancement of women, the CARICOM countries hoped that they could count on the support of Member States for the candidature of Ms. Roslyn Hazel of Saint Kitts and Nevis for membership on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

88. **Mr. Gurman** (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that the United Nations system was demonstrating great unity of purpose to promote inter-agency cooperation. At the country level, UNDP was working closely with United Nations system partners in inter-agency working groups and task forces to support national action plans for the Beijing Conference follow-up. The United Nations system had brought a common focus to gender mainstreaming concepts, culminating in an Economic and Social Council resolution on gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming was becoming a reality in UNDP programmes in countries throughout the world. UNDP also supported the further development of statistical systems and gender-equality indicators. As a result, national human development reports increasingly recognized and addressed the issues of gender equality.

89. UNDP had significantly increased its commitment to gender mainstreaming through a guidance note sent to all countries, a significant increase in funding for gender equality and the advancement of women, and a global gender programme.

90. UNDP human resources strategies would strengthen the accountability of management to utilize the talents and competencies of its female staff, to implement more effectively its gender-balance policy, and to attract and to retain women in its organization. There had been recent high-level UNDP appointments of women to senior management positions.

91. **Ms. Williams** (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action clearly articulated that to achieve sustainable, people-centred development, progress towards equality in the roles of men and women was essential. WHO examined how the differences between women and men determined differential exposure to risk, access to the benefits of technology and health care, rights and responsibilities, and control over their lives. A gender approach led to a consideration of not only biological factors, but also social and economic status and cultural, environmental, familial, occupational and political factors.

92. The World Health Assembly had adopted a resolution on violence against women that clearly outlined strategies in both research and operational activities, and established an interdivisional task force to implement and monitor activities in the area of violence against women and female genital mutilation.

93. The integration of a gender perspective into all WHO policies was gaining momentum, as seen in the increase of the number of women at senior and policy-making levels, and in their increased participation in the work of WHO through consultancies and scientific and technical advisory groups. Member States were urged to support the efforts of WHO by identifying women candidates and nominating women as members of the governing bodies.

94. WHO strongly endorsed the Economic and Social Council's conclusions on gender mainstreaming. Since health was an intersectoral issue, existing and new partnerships needed to be strengthened for the successful mainstreaming of gender issues into all WHO policies.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.